Shattered Lens: Part 6 – Photo Bias in Depictions of the IDF

BY **SIMON PLOSKER** - MARCH 9, 2011

It is very difficult to portray any military in a positive light for obvious reasons. Soldiers and weaponry are, by their nature, not conducive to creating positive imagery.

The three international wire services, however, consistently employ photo bias to show IDF soldiers in a dehumanized way.

Wire and Boots

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Title: An Israeli soldier stands in front of Pa

Caption: An Israeli soldier stands in front of Palestinian demonstrators holding up their national and the Turkish flags during a protest against Israel's separation barrier in the village of Maasarah, near the West Bank city of Bethlehem, on June 4, 2010.AFP PHOTO/MUSA AL-SHAER (Photo credit should read MUSA AL-SHAER/AFP/Getty Images)

Above, we see through the use of camera angles and positioning of the photographer, the jackboots, a gun and barbed wire with the Palestinian and Turkish flags perfectly centralized to create maximum artistic effect. There are only three other demonstrators visible in this picture but it achieves the goal of showing Israeli soldiers in a negative light.

Title: Israeli soldiers stand guard during a de

Caption: Israeli soldiers stand guard during a demonstration against the Israeli controversial separation barrier in the West Bank town of Beit Jala near Bethlehem on July 4, 2010. Israeli and Palestinian officials said they expected to start indirect peace talks within days, following the Arab League's endorsement of a US-brokered plan to end the impasse. AFP PHOTO/MUSA AL-SHAER (Photo credit should read MUSA AL-SHAER/AFP/Getty Images)

This again is an example of the above technique for the same purpose.

Smoke and Fire

In the images below from AFP/Getty and AP, the thick black smoke is caused by the burning of tires, creating the dramatic background reminiscent of a battlefield.

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Title: A stone thrown by Palestinian demonstrat

Caption: A stone thrown by Palestinian demonstrators at Israeli soldiers falls next to burning tires during a protest against Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank on June 4, 2010 in the village of Nabi Saleh, near Nablus. AFP PHOTO/JAAFAR ASHTIYEH (Photo credit should read JAAFAR ASHTIYEH/AFP/Getty Images)

Israeli soldiers gesture in front of a barricade set up by Palestinian demonstrators during a protest against th expansion of the nearby Jewish settlement of Halamish in the West Bank village of Nabi Saleh near Ramallah Friday June 4, 2010. (AP Photo/Majdi Mohammed)

Gunning For Children

The following images deliberately show children in a position that makes it appear that a weapon is being pointed at them.

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A Palestinian family walks as Israeli soldiers take positions during clashes with Palestinians, not seen, in the West Bank city of Hebron, Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2010. (AP Photo/Nasser Shiyoukhi)

Note in the image below, the use of the word “unseen” in the caption in relation to a Palestinian demonstration.

Title: Israeli soldiers stand guard near Palest

Caption: Israeli soldiers stand guard near Palestinian civilians during a protest (unseen) in Nabi Saleh, near Ramallah, on July 9, 2010 against the expropriation of Palestinian land to expand the nearby Jewish settlement of Halmish in the occupied West Bank. AFP PHOTO/ABBAS MOMANI (Photo credit should read ABBAS MOMANI/AFP/Getty Images)

Aim, Fire!

The next three images are made to appear that the IDF is firing directly at Palestinians for no apparent reason, with just the photographer’s description on the caption taken at face value.

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Title: Israeli soldiers fire tear gas canisters

Caption: Israeli soldiers fire tear gas canisters towards Palestinian stone-throwers during a demonstration against the expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank village of Iraq Burin, south of Nablus, on June 5, 2010. AFP PHOTO/JAAFAR ASHTIYEH (Photo credit should read JAAFAR ASHTIYEH/AFP/Getty Images)

Israeli soldiers aim their rifles at Palestinian demonstrators during a protest against the expansion of the nearby Jewish settlement of Halamish in the West Bank village of Nabi Saleh near Ramallah, Friday June 4, 2010. (AP Photo/Majdi Mohammed)

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Title: A news photographer takes a picture whil

Caption: A news photographer takes a picture while an Israeli soldier points his gun towards Palestinian and foreign demonstrators during a protest against Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank on June 18, 2010 in the village of Nabi Saleh, near Nablus. AFP PHOTO/JAAFAR ASHTIYEH (Photo credit should read JAAFAR ASHTIYEH/AFP/Getty Images)

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The image below highlights another very important aspect of this style of photography.

Through the use of an ultra wide angle lens the photographer is actually standing directly behind the soldier which gives the effect of the picture being elongated and the soldier's arm being very long.

The photographer is putting himself and the soldier in danger by positioning himself so close. There are very few situations throughout the world, certainly in the Middle East, where an army allows photographers to be in these kind of positions where the army's own activities can be undermined.

Title:	An Israeli soldier throws a teargas gren
Caption:	An Israeli soldier throws a teargas grenade to disperse Palestinian and foreign protesters during a demonstration in Beit Omar village, north of Hebron, on July 10, 2010 against Israel's controversial separation barrier and the expansion of nearby Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank. AFP PHOTO / HAZEM BADER (Photo credit should read HAZEM BADER/AFP/Getty Images)

Deliberate Provocation

The following pictures show examples of instances where the army are provoked to the point of forcibly removing demonstrators – a PR coup for the demonstrators aided by the photographers.

Indeed, note how some of the demonstrators deliberately pose for the cameras during confrontations with the IDF.

Title:	Israeli border police and soldiers arres
Caption:	Israeli border police and soldiers arrest a protestor as Israeli, foreign and Palestinian demonstrate against the demolishing of farm land to be used in the construction of Jewish settlements near the existing Israeli settlement of Karmi Tsor near the Palestinian village of Omar, just north of the West Bank town of Hebron on June 19, 2010. AFP PHOTO/HAZEM BADER (Photo credit should read HAZEM BADER/AFP/Getty Images)

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Title:	An Israeli soldier pushes away a demones
Caption:	An Israeli soldier pushes away a demonestrator as Palestinians and foreign activists protest in the village of Maasrah, near Bethlehem, against Israel's controversial separation barrier on June 18, 2010.AFP PHOTO/MUSA AL-SHAER (Photo credit should read MUSA AL-SHAER/AFP/Getty Images)

Title:	Palestinian women scuffle with Israeli s
Caption:	Palestinian women scuffle with Israeli soldiers during a protest against Jewish settlement in the occupied West Bank on June 18, 2010 in the village of Nabi Saleh, near Nablus. AFP PHOTO/JAAFAR ASHTIYEH (Photo credit should read JAAFAR ASHTIYEH/AFP/Getty Images)

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Title:	Israeli soldiers confront protesters dur
Caption:	Israeli soldiers confront protesters during a demonstration by Palestinian, Israeli and foreign activists against Israel's controversial separation barrier in the West Bank town of Beit Jala, near the biblical town of Bethlehem, on June 27, 2010. AFP PHOTO/MUSA AL-SHAER (Photo credit should read MUSA AL-SHAER/AFP/Getty Images)

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Title:	Israeli border police arrest demonstrato
Caption:	Israeli border police arrest demonstrators following a protest in Nabi Saleh, near Ramallah, on July 9, 2010 against the expropriation of Palestinian land to expand the nearby Jewish settlement of Halmish in the occupied West Bank. AFP PHOTO/ABBAS MOMANI (Photo credit should read ABBAS MOMANI/AFP/Getty Images)

The two images below from the same day from AFP/Getty and AP in Hebron highlight the use of cropped images. The few visible demonstrators indicates how the photographers have made the crops. The photographers also employ certain angles to make the soldiers appear big and the demonstrators small.

Title: Israeli soldiers block foreigners, left

Caption: Israeli soldiers block foreigners, left wing Israelis and Palestinians as they protest against the Jewish settlement, close to an Israeli checkpoint located at the entrance of the West Bank city of Hebron, leading to the Jewish settlement of Beit Romano on July 3, 2010. AFP PHOTO / HAZEM BADER (Photo credit should read HAZEM BADER/AFP/Getty Images)

Israeli soldiers hold back Palestinians and foreign activists during a protest against the closure of the Shuhad street to Palestinians and the Jewish settlements in the West Bank city of Hebron, Saturday, July 3, 2010. (A Photo/Nasser Shiyoukhi)

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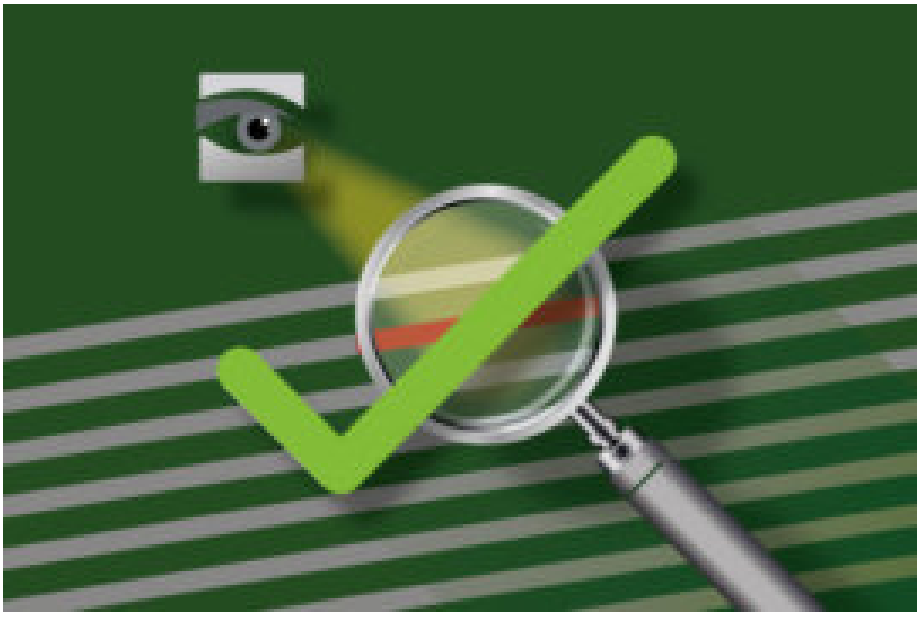

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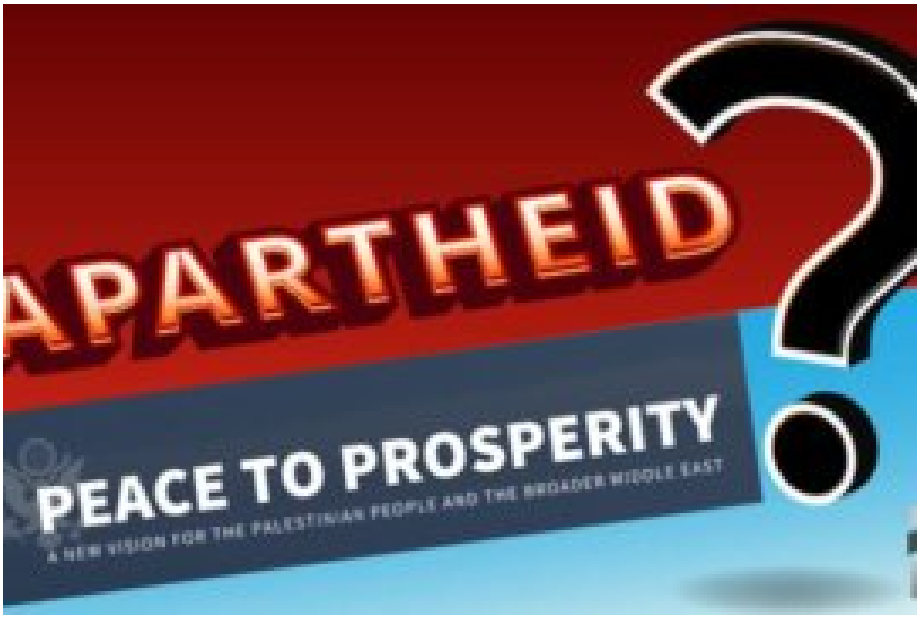

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